

National Vegetation Classification System (NVCS) Hierarchy Revision Process in Alaska

**Donald Long
USFS/MFSL**

**LANDFIRE Webinar
March 16th, 2011**

Status of the NVCS - 2004

H-2

Federal Geographic Data Committee
Vegetation Subcommittee

FGDC Vegetation Classification and Information Standards

June 3, 1996

Federal Geographic Data Committee Secretariat
USGS MS 590 National Center
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, VA 22092



International Classification
of Ecological Communities:

TERRESTRIAL VEGETATION of the UNITED STATES

VOLUME I

*The National Vegetation Classification System:
Development, Status, and Applications*

The
Nature
Conservancy®

Structure of the NVCS

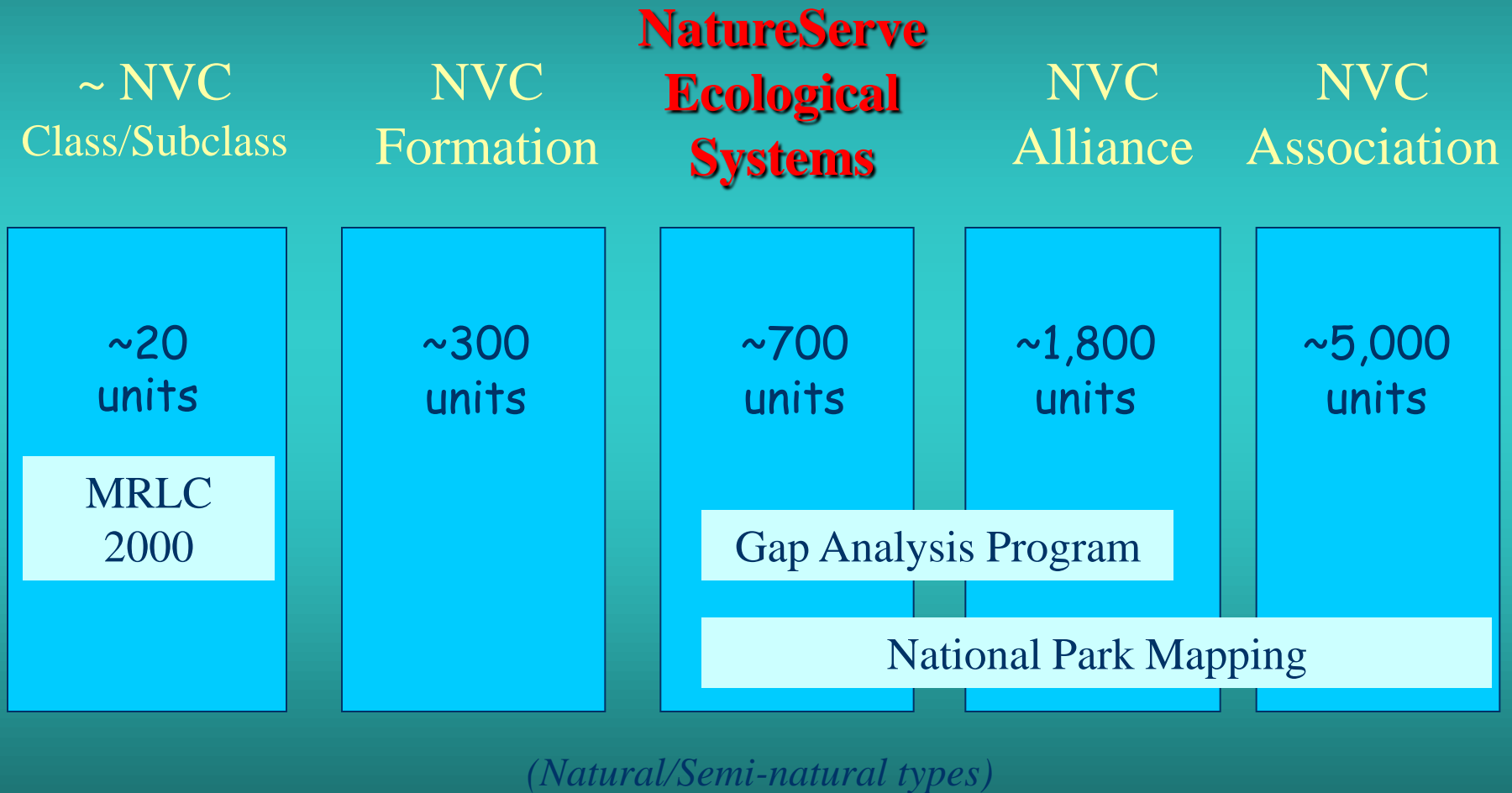
Class		<u>Woodland</u>
Subclass		<u>Evergreen</u> <u>Woodland</u>
Formation Group		<u>Temperate or Subpolar needle-leaved...</u>
Formation Subgroup		<u>Natural vs. Cultural</u>
<i>physiognomic levels</i>	Formation	<u>Rounded-crowned...</u>
<hr/>		
<i>floristic levels</i>	Alliance	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i> Woodland Alliance
	Association	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i> / <i>Arctostaphylos patula</i> Woodland

Mapping the NVCS



Thematic Target Legend

Developed with *NatureServe*



Hierarchy Revisions: H-6 Five Major Recommendations.

1. Reorganize physiognomic (formation) levels (Levels 1-3) to reflect ecological criteria.
2. Separate cultural vegetation from natural / semi-natural vegetation as a higher “categorical” level.
3. Redefine wetland formations based on broad vegetation criteria.
4. Define the mid-level units (Levels 4 – 6) based on both floristic and physiognomic criteria.
5. Separate semi-natural vegetation at mid-levels.

Hierarchy Revisions

Proposed Structure - draft

H-7

	FGDC 1997 – standard	Revised Hierarchy	
1	CLASS	CLASS	New upper levels
2	SUBCLASS	SUBCLASS	
3	FORMATION GROUP	FORMATION	
4	FORMATION SUBGROUP	DIVISION	New mid levels
5	FORMATION	MACROGROUP	
6	ALLIANCE	GROUP	
7	ASSOCIATION	ALLIANCE	
8		ASSOCIATION	

RECOMMENDED REVISION – 4

H-8

Define the mid-level units (Levels 4 - 6) based on both floristic and physiognomic criteria.

	FGDC 1997 – standard	Revised Hierarchy
1	CLASS	CLASS
2	SUBCLASS	SUBCLASS
3	FORMATION GROUP	FORMATION
4	FORMATION SUBGROUP	DIVISION
5	FORMATION	MACROGROUP
6	<i>ALLIANCE</i>	GROUP
7	<i>ASSOCIATION</i>	<i>ALLIANCE</i>
8		<i>ASSOCIATION</i>

By relying on a combination of floristic and physiognomic criteria for mid-level hierarchy units we provide the much-needed bridge between world-scale formation units and local-regional scale floristic units. Many vegetation ecologists have developed and use these kinds of mid-level units for assessing broad vegetation patterns

Status

1. Revised NVC Standard.

* Officially released Feb. 2008

http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/projects/FGDC-standards-projects/vegetation/NVCS_V2_FINAL_2008-02.pdf

2. Implementation Plan.

1. Core Funded Implementation (FGDC / USFS)

- Core activities (maintain content and data)
- Screening process for peer review of lower levels

2. User Funded Implementation (LANDFIRE/ National Park Service).

- Defining types for new mid-levels
- Screening process for mid and upper level types.

LANDFIRE – NPS

Hierarchy Revision Workshops

- **Western Workshop** in Boulder, CO - Nov. 2008
 - Western Forests, Shrublands, and Grasslands only
 - Not including Great Plains
 - Not Including Wetlands or Riparian
- **Eastern Workshop** in Raleigh-Durham, NC – Feb, 2009
 - Eastern Forests
 - Eastern Grasslands & Shrublands east of the Great Plains (glades, alvars, barrens, etc).
 - Eastern Wetlands

Mid-Level Development of Revised U.S. National Vegetation Classification

H-11

A Landfire Funded Project



Alaska NVC Workshop

Jan 11-13, 2011, Anchorage

OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP

- Understand the NVC approach, and IVC/CNVC collaborations
- Solid list of Groups and Macrogroups
- NatureServe staff write up Group descriptions, with support from Alaska HP.
- Plan for Peer review of Group Descriptions

USNVC Hierarchy: Alaska Example

H-13

Revised Hierarchy	Example
Upper	
Level 1 – Class	Mesomorphic Tree Vegetation
Level 2 – Subclass	Boreal Forest
Level 3 - Formation	Lowland-Montane Boreal Forest
Mid	
Level 4 – Division	North American Boreal Forest
Level 5 – Macrogroup	Western North American Boreal Conifer and Hardwood Forest
Level 6 – Group	Alaskan Mesic-Moist Black Spruce Forest Group
Lower	
Level 7 – Alliance	<i>Picea mariana</i> Saturated Forest Alliance
Level 8 – Association	<i>Picea mariana</i> / <i>Ledum groenlandicum</i> / <i>Carex trisperma</i> / <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. Forest